



INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER

The U.S. Embassy in Ukraine

Banned Books Week

September 23-30, 2006

Selected Web Resources

"If there is a bedrock principle underlying the First Amendment, it is that the government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable."

Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, in *Texas v. Johnson*

Banned Books Week was started in 1982 by the American Library Association, the American Booksellers Association, the Association of American Publishers and the National Association of College Stores to raise awareness of censorship problems in the United States and abroad. For the past 22 years, it has remained the only national celebration of the freedom to read.

Book banning is nothing new. Dante's *The Divine Comedy* was burned in 1497 on religious grounds. Queen Elizabeth censored parts of Shakespeare's *Tragedy of King Richard II* in 1597. Jean Jacques Rousseau's philosophical work was placed on the Roman Catholic Church's Index of Prohibited Works in the 18th century.

Book censorship of all kinds – even book-burning – continues today. In 2004, the ALA counted 524 challenges, mostly in schools. Many other cases go unreported.

Recently, a group of parents in Norwood, Colorado, burned Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* at a local high school. A group of parents in Blue Valley, Kansas have started a crusade to remove fourteen titles from district schools, including Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and Tobias Wolff's *This Boy's Life*.

Banned Books Week is celebrated during the last week of September by booksellers, librarians, authors, readers, students and other friends of free expression. Some create banned book displays. Others stage public readings of challenged titles or sponsor discussions of free speech issues.

Web Resources:

American Library Association (ALA): Banned Books Week
<http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/bannedbooksweek/bannedbooksweek.htm>

Amnesty International USA: Banned Books Week
<http://www.amnestyusa.org/bannedbooks/>

American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression (ABFFE)
<http://www.abffe.org/banned.htm>

Infoplease: Books Under Fire
<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/bannedbookslist.html>

Surfing the Net with Kids: Banned Books Week
<http://www.surfnetkids.com/banned.htm>

Google Book Search: Celebrate Your Freedom to Read
<http://books.google.com/googlebooks/banned/>

Digital Library Projects at the University of Pennsylvania: Banned Books Online
<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/books/banned-books.html>

Books AtoZ: Banned Books and Censorship
<http://www.booksatoz.com/censorship/banned.htm>

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